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Failed Recollections

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For Freedom's Sake

KYRA BLAIR

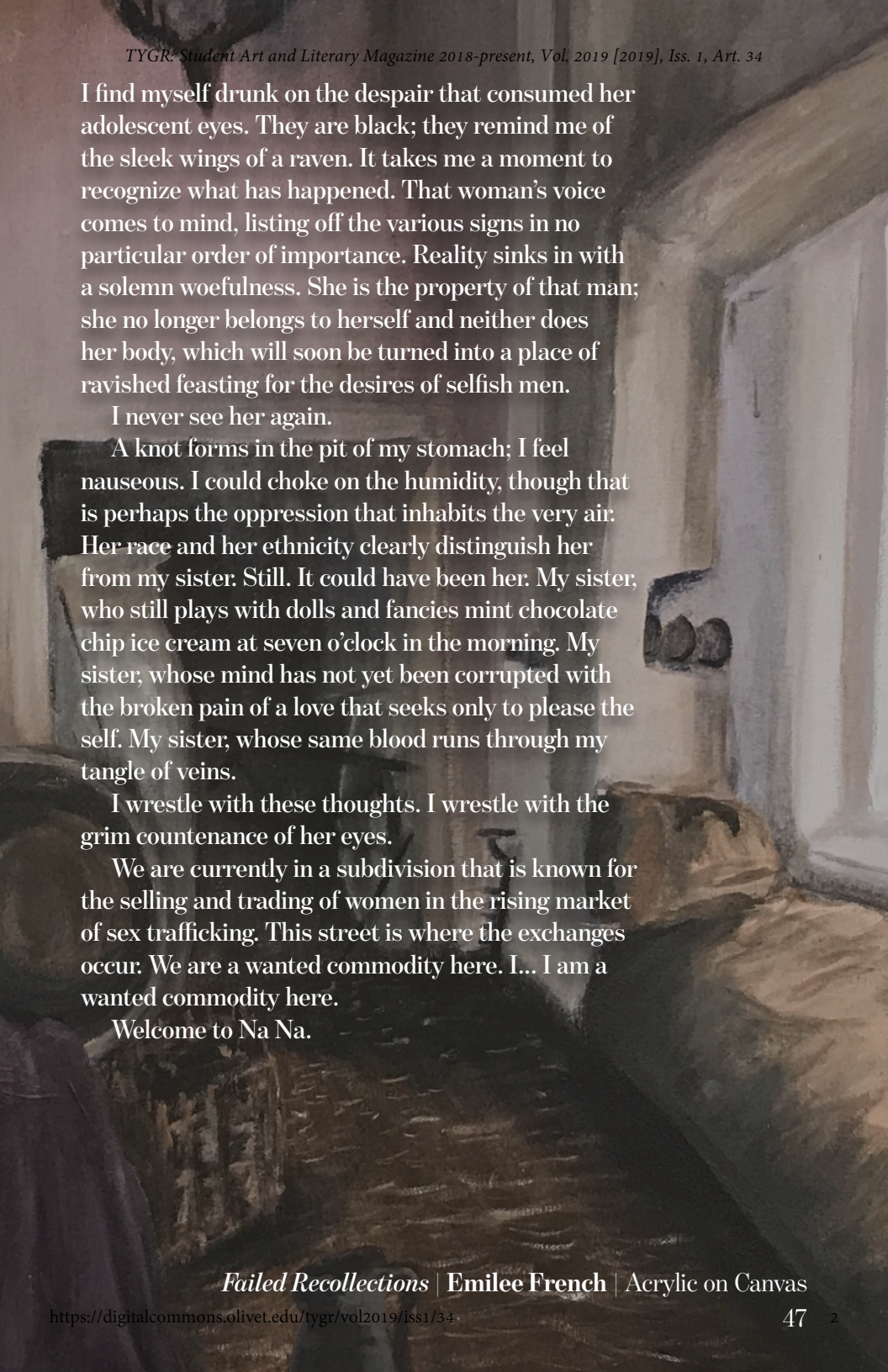
I am not quite sure what I was expecting. It was not this.

The compact avenues of Bangkok, Thailand do not resemble the familiar city streets of Chicago. Here, the buildings are dense and compact; the worn concrete and plaster that was used to fabricate each edifice is unkempt and falling apart at the touch. The paint is sweating in the thick afternoon heat. I think of myself in the same manner; shedding parts of myself as my body perspires. This is a fitting home for the manifold of bars and strip clubs that inhabit this particular area of the city. Their very presence screams of their inner vulgarity. A multitude of vehicles crowd the narrow streets, attempting to weave in and out of the busy, midday traffic. The sidewalks are filled with a moving sea of dark skin and the consistent hum of a language whose sound is foreign and unknown.

I am a minority here. I find this to be a strange concept.

I walk behind the others, careful not to fall too far behind. We are supposed to be praying in silence as we journey back to the train station; I cannot bring myself to do so, and even if I could, I do not believe my words would suffice. My attention is suddenly commanded by a young girl of southeast Asian descent. Her youth beholds her. She appears to be the age of my sister; perhaps even younger than her thirteen years. A white man takes her from the doorway of a dingy, dark building and the two begin to walk side by side down the street. His hand is pressed against her back, guiding her. This insignificant gesture is demanding of his authority. He is clearly older than she by a number of years; his fitted, gray suit is a stark contrast to her patterned smock. Its contents, both faded and threadbare, consume her petite frame with little effort.

Within moments, they disappear from my eyesight.



I find myself drunk on the despair that consumed her adolescent eyes. They are black; they remind me of the sleek wings of a raven. It takes me a moment to recognize what has happened. That woman's voice comes to mind, listing off the various signs in no particular order of importance. Reality sinks in with a solemn woefulness. She is the property of that man; she no longer belongs to herself and neither does her body, which will soon be turned into a place of ravished feasting for the desires of selfish men.

I never see her again.

A knot forms in the pit of my stomach; I feel nauseous. I could choke on the humidity, though that is perhaps the oppression that inhabits the very air. Her race and her ethnicity clearly distinguish her from my sister. Still. It could have been her. My sister, who still plays with dolls and fancies mint chocolate chip ice cream at seven o'clock in the morning. My sister, whose mind has not yet been corrupted with the broken pain of a love that seeks only to please the self. My sister, whose same blood runs through my tangle of veins.

I wrestle with these thoughts. I wrestle with the grim countenance of her eyes.

We are currently in a subdivision that is known for the selling and trading of women in the rising market of sex trafficking. This street is where the exchanges occur. We are a wanted commodity here. I... I am a wanted commodity here.

Welcome to Na Na.